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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

NIC 7868-83  
1 November 1983

National Intelligence Council

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Graham E. Fuller  
National Intelligence Officer for NESAs

SUBJECT: Briefing to House Ad Hoc Committee on Lebanon

1. On 31 October the DDCI, Deputy Director NESAs, and I briefed an ad hoc committee on Lebanon chaired by Tip O'Neill. The group consisted solely of Democrats. Although we anticipated the possibility of a possibly abrasive line of questioning vis-a-vis administration policy, the meeting was largely devoted to honest inquiry on the part of all members.

2. The DDCI took the lead in briefing the committee on the current situation in Lebanon, the background to the bombing of Marine Headquarters in Beirut and on the peace process. After an approximately 15 minutes presentation by the DDCI, John Helgeson reviewed more closely the evidence available to us on the culpability for the truck bomb incident. I then discussed the reconciliation process and the probable forms it would take, pointing out that although no major reconciliation was likely to take place, a liveable agreement might be reached among many of the parties which would help bring some stability to the country and which would deny Syria domination of the situation.

3. Many questions were devoted to the issue of the bombing and to the question of possible US retaliation. We all indicated that we believed Iran, at a minimum, should be the object of some sort of retaliatory measures by the US due to constant and implacable Iranian hostility to any US presence in the Middle East. We pointed out the fact of at least Syrian acquiescence to Iranian actions but indicated that there are profound differences between the Syrian and the Iranian view of the US in the region.

4. Many questions were devoted to the Marines' presence in Lebanon. Members were concerned with how necessary this presence was, the purpose it served and the likely duration of its stay there. As in previous briefings on the Hill, we indicated that US support of the Gemayel government was essential if a Gemayel government is to survive. We indicated that the

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Marines' presence has become at least as much political in nature as it is military, but that it would be up to the policymaker to decide precisely how many Marines were required and where they should be stationed in order to maintain the necessary strategic support for the Gemayel government throughout this process of negotiation. Some of the questions pressed us rather hard on specific policy recommendations. We avoided policy prescriptions in our responses, but clearly indicated the general perimeters within which we thought policy decisions would have to be made.

5. Many questions related to whether the Marines had adequate warning of the likelihood of violence being used against them. We indicated that there was no question of ample warning having been given repeatedly on the general nature of the risk, but that in very few cases could the warnings ever be precise as to place, time, and likely action to be taken. We demurred on the question of whether the Marines had taken adequate steps to protect themselves.

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7. O'Neill and the other members were very warm in expressing their appreciation for what they described as a very candid, honest, and informative discussion of the issues at hand. Most members believed in strong support for the US role in strengthening the Gemayel government, but were concerned with how readily this policy could be sold to the public at large.

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